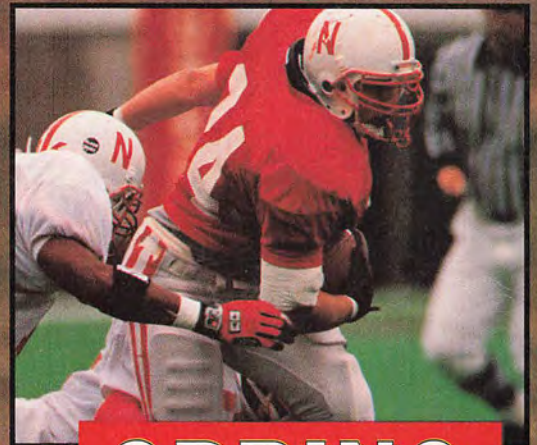


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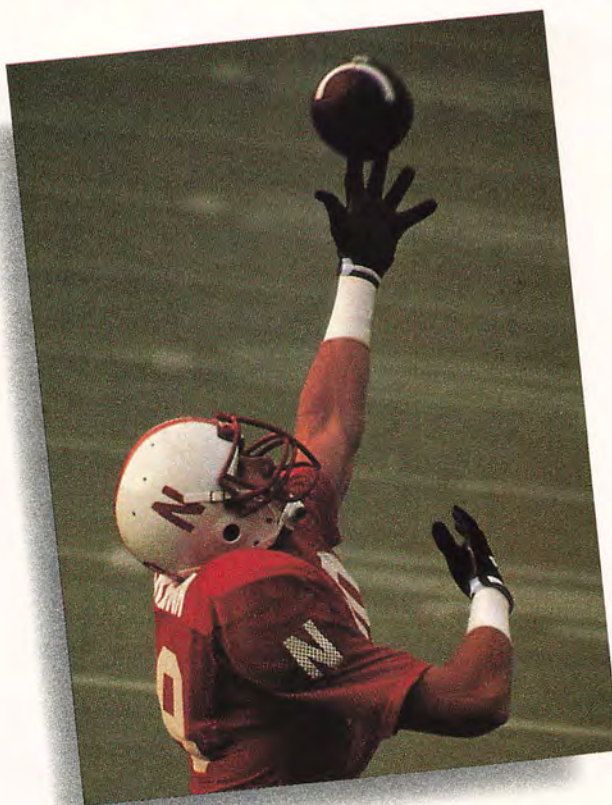


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### NEXT ISSUE

Our next issue (June/July — Vol. 15, No. 6) is the highly-anticipated college football preview. We'll give you a position by position breakdown on this year's team with all the strengths and weaknesses (if there are any). Look for it in your mailbox in the second week of June.





I'm scared about what the future holds for the Big 12.

Is it just me or does it seem weird that the conference's athletic directors decided to hire a former Southwest Conference commissioner in Steve Hatchell to head up the new conference? I'm sorry but if my arithmetic isn't that rusty, there were eight teams before and four were added. That would indicate that the former participants of the Big Eight would try to get their own guy in office, not a Texas homer.

There is already talk of moving the conference basketball tournament to Dallas. Are you kidding? Kemper gets old, but at least it's centrally located. I think the Big Eight has already sacrificed enough. I mean isn't it enough that the Oklahoma-Nebraska game was lost as a yearly game? I think so.

Someone needs to remind the Big Eight ADs that we invited the Texas schools. Consequently the Lone Star schools should be playing by our rules and not vice versa. Don't let the Texas influence get out of hand.

Carol Sanders  
Sacramento, Calif.

If we've got to have a dilemma in the football camp, I'm glad it's the result of too many good players and not a lack of bodies. It seems like for years we have entered spring ball wondering who would be our quarterback. Before Tommie Frazier it seemed like the coaches were trying to pick from the also-rans. AF (after Frazier) things improved, but we were still left with the quandary of who could step up if he went down.

Last year we found a hidden jewel in Brook Berringer. It's too bad that he doesn't have an extra year so that maybe he would get his shot by himself. I hate to see either of these fine quarterbacks sitting the bench.

Kelvin Johnson  
Omaha, Neb.

What happened? I thought our basketball team was going to compete in some for this year. Instead, it seemed like they just quit.

On paper, we appeared to have more talent than most of the teams in the league including Oklahoma. But yet the Sooners went to the Big Dance (albeit a short stay), while Nebraska settled for the NIT. As much as it pains me to say, Oklahoma was successful because they wanted to be. I don't know if our team cared.

Here's hoping for better things in next season.

Keith Watterman  
Dixon, Ill.

I thought your article "Class Action" (April 1995) on how Nebraska built a national champion team with what the experts called "so-so talent" was excellent. Every year I keep your recruiting recap stories and try to follow the kids, but it gets very confusing and time consuming. The article gave me a quick way to look at the last five classes and see who we've got returning. I guess this article saves me from writing you to find out what happened to Jim Stiebel.

Ryan Harvey  
Tyler, Texas

Can you tell how our volleyball team did in recruiting this year? I know we were going to lose a couple of people, but haven't heard how well we've done in rebuilding. I heard a while back that we were in on some good player from Hawaii. Is there any truth to that rumor?

Paula Hatcher  
Sacramento, Calif.

Coach Terry Pettit had a very successful recruiting season. In fact it was voted the best in the country by Volleyball, a magazine dedicated to covering what else — volleyball. The player you are referring to from Hawaii is Fiona Nepo a 5-foot-9 setter/hitter from Honolulu. — Editor

I heard from a buddy of mine in Texas that new Sooner Coach Howard Schnellenberger has been trying to rally the Crimson faithful into a frenzy. He said the former Louisville coach has been talking about filling Norman like the Huskers do. I guess that's a form of flattery.

But he also maintains in his fire-and-football speech that both Nebraska and Oklahoma could go into the regular-season finale tied at 10-0. He also maintains that if the Sooners get fired up they can beat not only Nebraska, but win a national title.

Well I told my friend he needs to let Schnellenberger know that he isn't playing those cream puffs he faced while at Louisville. If he thinks rolling into Lincoln in late November and trying to steal a win is easy, he's got another thing coming.

William Ross  
Lincoln, Neb.

This may seem like a slightly odd letter compared to ones you normally run. I am one of those people who likes to hear how our student-athletes do, both on and off the field. I have read all year, and not just in *Huskers Illustrated*, how football player Rob Zatechka has been able to maintain a 4.0 in biology through his years at Nebraska. What I was wondering is who is the female student-athlete equivalent? Who ever it is, I think we need to applaud both their, and the many other athletes who hit the books on a regular basis, achievements.

Dorthy Kantu  
Dallas, Texas

You are absolutely correct. The efforts many of these kids put forth in the classroom is usually given a backseat to what they do in the sports pages. As for your question, Zatechka and senior gymnast Nicole Duval were recently named the 1995 Male and Female Student-Athletes of the Year.

Zatechka, an offensive lineman and captain on the national championship football team, graduated with a 4.0 grade point average. He also earned NCAA Today's Top Eight honors and was the GTE/CoSIDA Academic All-American of the Year for football.

Duval, a Lincoln, Neb., native finished her academic career with a 3.95 gpa in biological sciences. A two-time first-team GTE Academic all-american, Duval earned All-Big Eight honors on the vault this year. — Editor

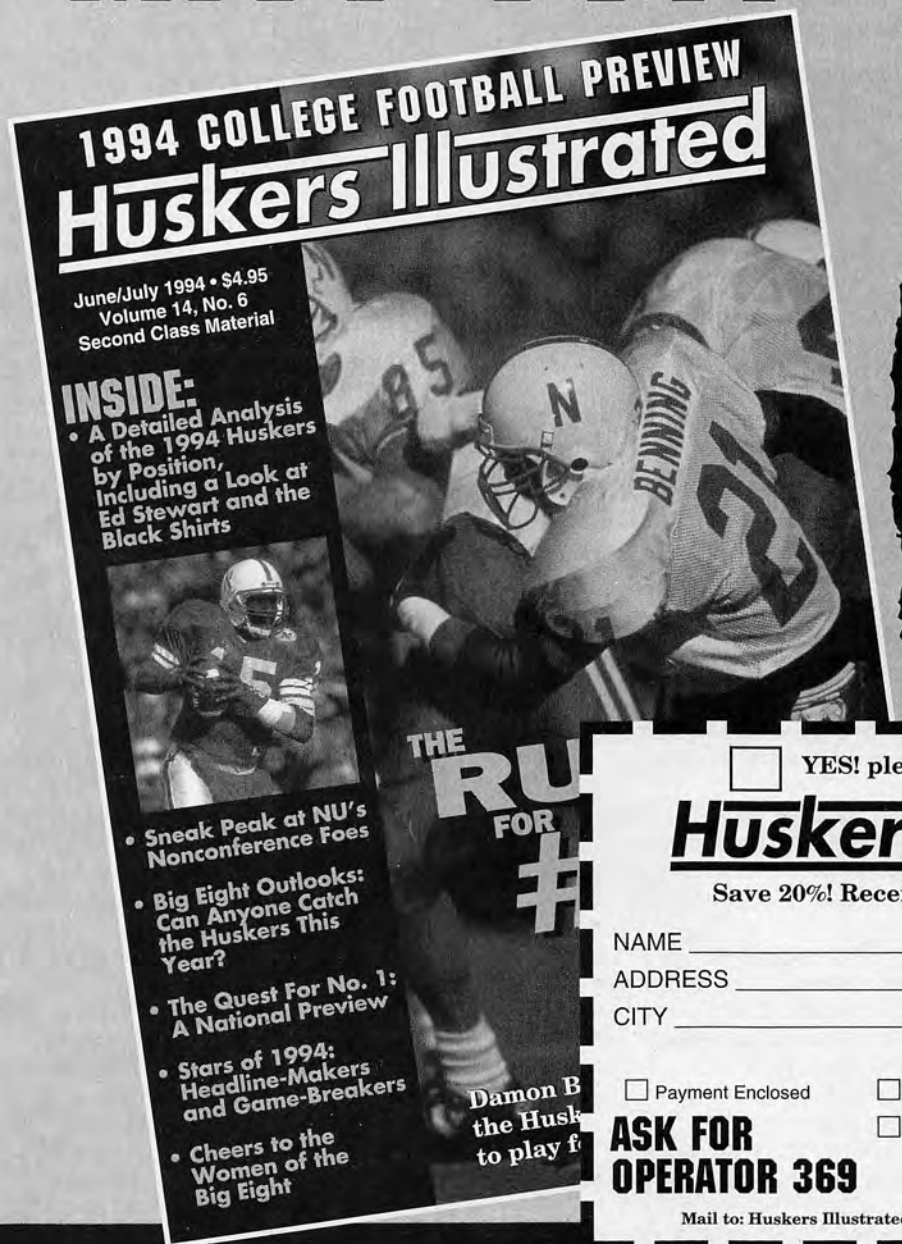


**Rob Zatechka (above) and Nicole Duval (left) were named Nebraska's Male and Female Student-Athletes of the Year.**



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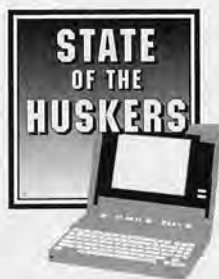
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# Legend of the Fall

*No one should forget what Devaney means to Nebraska*

By MIKE BABCOCK

**H**appy birthday, and many happy returns. Bob Devaney celebrated his 80th birthday on April 13. It is hard to believe, maybe, but Devaney is 80 years old. He was born in Saginaw, Mich., in 1915, the son of a sailor on the ore boats in the Great Lakes.

It seems like only yesterday that Devaney arrived in Lincoln from Wyoming, and overnight, restored the university's once-proud football tradition. The year before he arrived, the Cornhuskers were 3-7. His first year, they went 9-2. And they have faltered only twice since.

Devaney's teams went 6-4 in 1967 and 1968. He redefined the standard by which success is determined.

Devaney has been Nebraska's own for 33 years now, and counting. He remains among the state's greatest resources.

The columns just to the south of Memorial Stadium symbolize how great. They were erected in honor of the back-to-back 100 Cornhusker career coaching victories compiled by Devaney and Tom Osborne.

The columns are less frail than the men whose accomplishments they represent. It is the nature of human existence. Nebraskans were reminded of that in early March, when Devaney was admitted to the intensive care unit at Lincoln's Bryan Memorial Hospital because of a sudden elevation in his blood pressure. Doctors determined he had suffered a mild stroke.

After being released following a brief stay at the hospital, Devaney underwent therapy for the effects of the stroke at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital, also located in Lincoln. While he was there, he released a statement through the hospital. It said in part: "The people of Nebraska are great. I want to thank everyone for their support. I

feel good. I'm working hard, and I'll be home soon."

And so he was.

By his 80th birthday celebration, Devaney was again spending time at his South Stadium office, conducting business as the Cornhuskers' athletic director, and legend, emeritus. He tires easily, but that's to be expected.

For most Nebraskans, it is difficult to imagine Devaney beset by the

the young combatants were driven only by pride and by self-preservation. He was among those young toughs.

He has never backed down from a challenge and has always seemed as indestructible as the record he fashioned. As those of college football's legendary coaches go, Devaney's career was brief — 16 seasons, the last 11 at Nebraska.

He was 42 years old when he took his first head coaching job at Wyoming. He was not yet 60 years old when he stepped down as head coach of the Cornhuskers in 1972, proving again that his sagacity was equal to his tenacity by selecting Osborne as his successor. But he continued as athletic director until he was nearly 78, well past the age when most are so productive.

Since then, Devaney's primary responsibility has been fundraising, something he continues to do with a unique personal appeal that transcends even his coaching record.

The affection Nebraskans have for him defies reasonable explanation. The university — and the state, for that matter — can never properly repay Devaney for what he has accomplished in its name. He is unique, one of a kind, an original, a rare Nebraska treasure.

Devaney is a legendary figure, ranking with the all-time greats of his profession, among them Paul "Bear" Bryant, Amos Alonzo Stagg, Glenn "Pop" Warner and Wayne "Woody" Hayes. It is a special opportunity to be confronted by such greatness in our lifetime.

We should remind Devaney of that, lest he forget, and not just because of something unexpected, such as the mild stroke in March. A belated birthday wish would do for starters.

He can be contacted by writing: Bob Devaney, Athletic Director Emeritus, c/o University of Nebraska, 105 South Stadium, Lincoln, NE 68588-0120.

Let him know he is appreciated. Send him a note. And say thanks. ■



**Bob Devaney celebrated his 80th birthday while recovering from a mild stroke suffered in March.**

infirmities of age. Our image of him has been shaped not only by his remarkable success as a coach and athletic director but also by his background.

He has always been the tough little Irishman, the collegiate boxing champion who survived the Depression and spent three years working in the Chevrolet iron foundry in Saginaw before beginning a journey that would take him to college football's Hall of Fame.

As coaching motivation, Devaney occasionally described for his players the fights involving neighborhood toughs in the back alleys of Saginaw, blue-collar battles in which



# Petit Signs No. 1 Volleyball Class

**Three prep All-Americans  
help give Nebraska top  
ranking over UCLA,  
Colorado, Long Beach State  
and Georgia Tech**

After Nebraska lost to Penn State in the Midwest Regional Finals — ending an otherwise perfect season at 31-1 — it was wondered whether the program would be able to rebound from its emotional letdown. The answer, which came in late March, appears to be "Yes."

Instead of moping about what could have been, Head Coach Terry Pettit put the final touches on his 1995 signing class. The class, consisting of Lisa Avery (6-1, middle blocker from Shawnee Mission, Kan.), Jaime Krendak (6-0, outside hitter from Lincoln, Neb.), Fiona Nepo (5-9, setter/hitter from Honolulu, Hawaii) and Renee Saunders (5-11, outside hitter from Omaha, Neb.), was named the best in the country according to *Volleyball* magazine.

The Huskers, which signed three of the 18 Mizuno prep All-Americans including Krendak, a first-team selection, topped UCLA, Long Beach State, Colorado and Georgia Tech for national honors. All four of the signees were on the *Volleyball* Fabulous 50 list.

"It's a typical Nebraska recruiting class in a sense. Three of them have been in our camps — they're very athletic and very talented," Pettit said. "The thing that sets them apart from classes of five years ago is their extensive junior play and high school coaching."

Krendak led Lincoln East to a 38-1 record, a No. 1 national ranking and the 1994 Nike Challenge team title as a senior. Playing in every match during her four-year prep career, she recorded 319 kills, 65 service aces, 195 digs and a .427 hitting percentage.

"I think she's (Krendak) probably one of the top two or three left side players in the country," Pettit said. "She's capable of playing any of the frontcourt positions, but for us would be a left-side player."

Joining Krendak as a two-time first-team Super-State selection



**Jaime Krendak signed with the Huskers after a stellar prep career at Lincoln East.**

(*Lincoln Journal-Star*), Saunders led the Metro with 5.0 kills per game and totaled 335 kills, 190 digs and had a hitting percentage of .402.

Named by *USA Today* as one of the top 12 high school basketball players in Nebraska, Saunders will also play basketball for Coach Angela Beck's team following her freshman year.

"Renee is capable of playing two or three positions," Pettit said. "She played left side and her junior year she middle blocked. She also has the court savvy to enable her to be trained as a setter. She's a fierce

competitor and is technically strong."

The 1994 Hawaii Player of the Year, Nepo (pronounced NEH-poe) is already being compared to former Husker great and current assistant Coach Cathy Noth.

An explosive player, Nepo could play either setter or outside hitter.

Playing in 85 games as a senior, Avery averaged 4.08 kills per game and had 347 kills and 262 blocks.

"She's an exceptional athlete," Pettit said. "She's very quick and is probably as quick a middle blocker as we've ever recruited."

Rarely, with a program as talented as Nebraska's, do freshmen have a chance to play immediately. But that could change next year.

"I think what is unusual about these four players is they have the technical skills to play right away," Pettit said. "Every year we have one freshman who could play a significant role, but this year all four of these people are capable of playing significant roles. I think it's a very interesting class." ■



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# ACTION NOT

# WORDS

**If the Cornhuskers are to repeat, they have to believe they can.  
It all begins with an attitude**

**T**om Osborne was visibly upset after a scrimmage on the second Wednesday of spring practice. The No. 1 offense hadn't performed well.

The scrimmage produced only two touchdowns, both against the second-team defense, including a 12-yard pass from Brook Berringer to split end Kenny Cheatham, a red-shirted freshman from Phoenix. "I didn't see the No. 1 offense do much at all today," Osborne said. "They played poorly and didn't seem very excited about it."

Osborne seemed more concerned about the level of enthusiasm than the performance. If Nebraska is to make a serious run at repeating as national champion, attitude will be a significant factor.

Winning back-to-back titles is a considerable task, anyway. The last to accomplish it was Alabama, which won national titles under Bear Bryant in 1978 and 1979. Alabama also won a national championship in 1992. But the next season, the

**The offense ran into a physical and mental wall as spring practice started.**

Crimson Tide was a disappointing 14th in the final *Associated Press* poll.

"They spent so much time celebrating, they forgot to play," Osborne said.

Whether or not his Cornhuskers would fall into such a trap was a question for which spring practice might provide something of an answer, according to Osborne. "Last year's team was hungry," he said

before the 15 spring practices began. "I don't know if the hunger will be there.

"It's too early to tell. The competition in spring practice will help some. But it is a concern."

And on that particular Wednesday afternoon, at least, it was a great concern.

Three days later, Osborne's worry was assuaged some by a much more





spirited scrimmage. "The execution was better than last Wednesday, and the hitting was very good. It was hard-hitting and vicious," he said. And, more importantly in light of what had happened earlier in the week, the effort was there.

Nebraska again will be talented enough to compete for the national championship. That's a given. But repeat success will depend on mental as well as physical considerations, according to senior tight end Mark Gilman. "The coaches are very concerned about that," he said. "They've told us people will be gunning for us."

Gilman, who caught a 19-yard touchdown pass from Berringer for the Cornhuskers' first score in the Orange Bowl game victory against Miami, hasn't become complacent. "I want to go out with success like the seniors last year," he said. "When you're a senior, you want to be a leader."

Junior defensive back Mike Minter has a national championship ring, but he didn't get to experience the excitement of playing for it. He was forced to watch, after suffering a knee injury in the second game last season against Texas Tech.

"I've got to play in one (national title game)," Minter said. "It was exciting when the games were going on (last season), but I didn't feel like I was a part of the team, otherwise. I'm going to be pushing everyone. I know the fellas want to do it again, and that makes me feel good."

Having Minter back on the field in the spring made the defensive coaches feel good. He was the quar-



## Fresh Faces Make Impact In Spring Drills

### NEW BLOOD

Numerous young players were rotated into action with the top units as a means of evaluation, the results of which won't be apparent until the coaches have had an opportunity to carefully consider the spring in its entirety.

Redshirted freshman walk-on Joel Makovicka, the brother of senior full-back Jeff Makovicka, was among the spring's pleasant surprises, twice drawing post-scrimmage praise. "He's going to be a heck of a player," Osborne said after he rushed for 52 yards on seven carries during the first scrimmage. He also scored a touchdown on a 10-yard run against the No. 3 defense that day.

Several young players earned praise from the coaches during the spring, among them Aaron Taylor, a sophomore offensive guard from Wichita Falls, Texas; Jason Peter, a sophomore defensive tackle (and the brother of senior Christian Peter) from Middletown, N.J.; Octavious McFarlin, a sophomore rover back from Bastrop, Texas; Mike Rucker, a redshirted freshman outside linebacker from St. Joseph, Mo.; and Jay Foreman, a redshirted freshman strongside linebacker from Eden Prairie, Minn.

Spring wasn't only for the young, of course. Luther Hardin, a senior who has earned three letters as a reserve, was singled out for his play at outside linebacker on a couple of occasions. ■



**Defensive tackle Jason Peter (95) and offensive guard Aaron Taylor (67) are quickly becoming depth-chart movers.**

terback of the secondary until his injury.

If Nebraska is to have realistic hopes of repeating, players such as Gilman, Minter and Christian Peter will have to take leadership roles. Peter, a senior defensive tackle who will be lining up alongside his sophomore brother Jason this fall, showed a willingness to do so during the spring.

"It's been a learning process," Christian Peter said. "I'm learning more and more. I've got one more year left." And he wants to make the most of it.

The experience of last season can have a positive effect on the 1995 Nebraska team by proving what can be accomplished. The Cornhuskers have gone through the national title door once. There's no reason for them to think they can't go through it again. One national title can be a motivation to work toward another.

"It feels really good to get it done," said Gilman, who constantly thinks of his touchdown catch in the Orange Bowl. "Not a day goes by that I don't think about it. It makes every day seem a lot better. I can't

really put it (the feeling) into words."

Gilman's focus in the spring, and now the summer, isn't words, however. It's action, the sort of dedication that earned him the award as the Cornhuskers' "Lifter of the Year" for 1995. National championship success "isn't a five-months-a-year thing. It's the summer and winter, too. It's what you do today that will matter (in the fall)," Gilman said.

Working during the off-season "was one of the main reasons I got on the field," he said. When the season begins, "if you've been working hard all summer, it's like the first game for the other guys but for you it's like the third game of the season."

The Cornhuskers worked extremely hard last summer, according to Gilman.

"There had to be 50 to 70 guys a day here," he said. "In other programs, there are maybe 15 or 20."

Before spring practice began, senior quarterback Tommie Frazier said he thought players were working even harder after they won a

See SPRING page 29





# DEAD HEAT

## Starting Quarterback Quandary Will Remain In Limbo Until August

**S**o if you expected to find out during spring practice whether Tommie Frazier or Brook Berringer would be the starting quarterback when defending national champion Nebraska opens the 1995 season, you're going to be disappointed. Tom Osborne won't name his starter until the fall.

"We probably won't decide on a starter until a week before the first game," he said. At press time, the Cornhuskers' first game was scheduled to be against Michigan State on Sept. 9 at East Lansing, Mich. The 11 a.m. CDT game will be televised by ABC.

Nebraska and Missouri had discussed moving their Oct. 14 game at Memorial Stadium to Aug. 31, to accommodate a national telecast on the ESPN cable network. But such a change was dependent on several

factors, including Missouri's rescheduling a Sept. 2 game against North Texas in Columbia, Mo., and the NCAA's making a special allowance for the game to be played on Aug. 31.

Either way, it appears the earliest Cornhusker fans can expect to know who will be the quarterback would be late August, after Nebraska has gone through most of preseason practice. By then, Osborne's preference is, either Frazier or Berringer will have asserted himself. "I'd rather not use two quarterbacks," said Osborne.

Frazier and Berringer shared time with the No. 1 offense during spring practice. Both performed well enough, based on outward appearance, to leave the situation in doubt.

In recent years, the quarterbacks have worn green jerseys

as an indication to defensive players to hold up in contact to avoid injuries. But the green jerseys weren't handed out this spring.

Frazier didn't seem any the worse for wear after missing much of last season because of a blood-clotting problem. His passing continued to improve, as evidenced by his performance in the final Saturday scrimmage before the Spring Game. Frazier completed 6-of-8 passes for 118 yards and two touchdowns, of 25 yards to split end Reggie Baul and 32 yards to wingback Clester Johnson.

Both passes were textbook. Frazier threw the one to Baul across his body, moving to his left and under pressure, as Baul ran to the corner of the end zone. The ball sailed perfectly over his shoulder and into his hands. Soon after, Frazier and Baul teamed up on another completion, a 38-yard play on which all of the yards came through the air. Frazier dropped back and almost nonchalantly lofted the ball.

A couple of downs after that play, he passed to Johnson on a crossing pattern, splitting two defenders. Johnson didn't have to break stride, catching the ball at the 15-yard line and running, untouched to the end zone. The defenders pulled up dead in their tracks, in shocked disbelief.

Berringer was similarly effective at times during the spring.

Senior Clinton Childs was moved from I-back to fullback during the spring, in order to shore up the position following the departure of Cory Schlesinger and also to increase Childs' opportunity to get onto the field, according to Osborne.

**With a bevy of I-backs returning, Clinton Childs (26) opted to switch to fullback to get more playing time.**





Nebraska should be well-stocked at I-back, with the return of Lawrence Phillips and Damon Benning and the addition of Brian Knuckles and Ahman Green.

The 6-foot, 215-pound Childs showed that he was physical enough to play fullback, where senior Jeff Makovicka is the only returning player with significant experience. Makovicka carried 47 times for 321 yards and two touchdowns last season. The only other letterman fullback is junior walk-on Brian Schuster.

Two former fullbacks were moved to tight end, another position of concern, during the spring: Tim Carpenter, who had already been working there, and Vershan Jackson. Both are sophomores.

Nebraska's offensive philosophy requires at least three tight ends, and preferably four. "It's a position with great potential for the future," according to receivers coach Ron Brown. But the immediate concern is that senior Mark Gilman is the only experienced tight end, and the others remained bunched during the spring.

In addition to Carpenter and Vershan Jackson, the group included redshirted freshmen Sheldon Jackson and Dorrick Roy and sophomore walk-on Joe Horst.

Gilman showed that he's ready to step up a level, after a junior season in which he alternated with Matt Shaw and Eric Alford, catching 17 passes for 196 yards and a touchdown against Missouri. "What I've got to do is put myself on top, block like Matt and catch like Eric," said Gilman.

The other finalists for the coveted award were seniors Christian Peter and Tyrone Williams and juniors Jared Tomich and Mike Minter. All are defensive players except Gilman.

Minter performed under close scrutiny during the spring, after suffering a season-ending knee injury in the second game against Texas Tech. The evidence suggests he'll pick up where he left off, as one of the rising young stars in the Big Eight, if not the country. During post-winter conditioning tests, Minter ran the 40-yard dash in an electronically timed 4.55, just a step off his 4.41 a year ago.

He wore a brace on his left knee in the spring, but the brace comes off in the fall, he said. He was so committed to recovering fully that he remained in Lincoln during the university's spring break to prepare for



**Transfer Scott Frost will have to sit out this fall, but the quarterback's future looks bright.**

the first Saturday scrimmage were inauspicious. His pitch on an option couldn't be handled by the I-back, producing a 16-yard loss, and he was sacked for an 8-yard loss on the next. But on his third play, he completed a pass good for 41 yards. He threw the ball under heavy pressure, without an opportunity to set himself. The ball carried nearly all of the 41 yards in the air.

Frost finished that first scrimmage with eight pass completions in 11 attempts for 127 yards. During a subsequent scrimmage, the 6-foot-3, 215-pound Frost showed he could run as well as pass, scoring on a 20-yard touchdown run. He'll have ample time to learn Nebraska's offense.

The more pressing issue at quarterback, however, involves Frazier and Berringer. They were dead-even going into the spring. And as far as anyone know, they'll be dead-even going into fall camp. ■

spring practice. "I can't give myself a break," said Minter, a safety.

The spring also provided what could be a glimpse of the quarterback of the future, as much-heralded Scott Frost, the transfer from Stanford, practiced. Frost will go through the fall and another spring before he'll be eligible to play for the Cornhuskers. His first two plays in

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## SPRING BITS & PIECES

Lawrence Phillips spent most of spring practice watching.

First, there was a problem with his left hamstring. Then, an ankle sprain kept Nebraska's Heisman Trophy candidate I-back on the sideline.

"Phillips hurt his ankle running to class," Coach Tom Osborne said. "I had never heard of that one before. But I guess it's as good of a reason as any."

At least Osborne could maintain a sense of humor about it.

After missing five practices, one third of the spring total, Phillips was able to participate. One his first play during his first scrimmage, however, he was hit in the head and sidelined again, briefly.

Phillips returned that day, to carry five times for 22 yards and catch two passes for 12 yards. At last, he was ready to begin serious preparations for his junior season.

He was, that is, until a severely pulled left hamstring — possibly a result of his attempting to compensate for the problem with his right — forced him to resume being an unwilling spectator of the proceedings.

Phillips' absence most of the spring would have been more of a concern for a less established player, though before practice began, Osborne indicated that he and Frank Solich, his assistant head coach and running backs coach, were interest in seeing if Phillips could carry additional weight.

Phillips was noticeably bigger, checking in at nearly 220 pounds.

Still, Osborne knows what Phillips is capable of doing, after a sophomore season in which he rushed for 1,722 yards and 16 touchdowns. The problem was, the other top I-backs weren't healthy, either.

Junior Damon Benning was out early in the spring with a hamstring problem, and Brian Knuckles, a junior coming off a redshirt season, was on and off the field because of injuries.

Add to that a position switch to fullback for senior Clinton Childs, who alternated with Benning as Phillips' back-up last season, and Nebraska had a less-than-ideal situation at I-back.

"If we get people healed up, our backfield will be pretty good," Osborne said after practice one day. He was referring specifically to the Cornhusker I-backs, who will be joined in the fall by Ahman Green.

An absence of great concern to Osborne during the spring was that of kicker Darin Erstad, who gave his undivided attention, and considerable athletic skills, to the Nebraska baseball team in the spring.

Even that probably would have been tolerable if there were reason for optimism regarding the possibility of Erstad's returning to kick in the fall.

He could. He would be only a junior, and his name was included on the Cornhuskers' spring roster. "He said he wants to come back, finish another semester (of classes) and play some more football," Osborne said.

But Erstad is projected to be a first-round pick in the

June major league baseball draft. He could be the first collegiate player chosen, in fact. And if the team that drafts him doesn't want him to play football because of the money it invests in him, "we'll have to find replacements," said Osborne.

One of the candidates to replace Erstad, who handled long field goals, and Tom Sieler, who kicked short field goals and extra points, was Ted Retzlaff, a sophomore walk-on from Waverly, Neb. But Retzlaff missed the spring after suffering a knee injury playing basketball during the university's spring break.

As a result, the Cornhuskers found themselves short of place-kickers. Sophomores Lance Brown and Jesse Kosch competed with redshirted freshman Brian Morro in the spring. Kosch, a candidate to replace Erstad as the punter, and Morro are walk-ons.

Nebraska appeared to survive the spring without suffering significant injuries to key players. Back-up quarterback Matt Turman was bothered by cartilage damage in a knee, also suffered playing basketball. But the junior from Wahoo, Neb., wore a brace and was able to delay arthroscopic surgery after spring practice.

Sophomore walk-on Monte Christo, another quarterback, missed the spring because of back surgery to repair a ruptured disc, and junior weakside linebacker Jamel Williams was held out to recover from shoulder surgery. Otherwise, the Cornhusker injuries were commonplace for the spring.

Senior cornerback Tyrone Williams suffered a broken bone in a hand but wasn't sidelined for an appreciable amount of time, and several other front-line players missed scrimmages or were limited because of injuries. But as the team went into its final week of the spring, Osborne was encouraged. "At this point in spring ball, (the injury situation) isn't bad," he said.

Midway through the spring, senior split end John Livingston left the team for unspecified reasons. Livingston, a transfer from Arizona State who earned a letter as a reserve last season, was listed third on the pre-spring depth chart, behind senior Reggie Baul and junior Brendan Holbein, who alternated at split end.

Among the other players who could have returned but will be missing from the roster in the fall

are wide receiver Brett Popplewell and defensive back Trampis Wrice. Popplewell, a walk-on from Melbourne, Australia, earned two letters as a reserve and would have been a senior. But he was bothered by injuries and didn't finish last season. Wrice, a scholarship recruit from Valdosta, Ga., would have been a junior. He was put on a medical hardship, according to Osborne. ■



**Lawrence Phillips has bulked up to 220 pounds, but injuries kept him out for most of the spring.**



**Basketball injuries sidelined a few players, including back-up quarterback Matt Turman.**





# BLITZIN' BOHL

**Loyalty and a penchant for attacking defenses  
makes Craig Bohl a perfect fit in Lincoln**

It was a little like being trapped in time, Craig Bohl said, or finding yourself in a situation similar to the one portrayed in the recent Bill Murray movie *Groundhog Day*, with events repeating themselves. That's how it felt when Bohl participated in his first meetings of the Nebraska football coaching staff, anyway.

Bohl, who was hired as the Cornhuskers' inside linebackers coach in early February, had been away from the program for 10 years. But some things hadn't changed. The interaction between Coach Tom Osborne and his assistants, for example.

In many ways, Bohl felt as if he had never been away. And there was considerable comfort in that. The stability it represents is a significant element of Nebraska's success. "This is a good group of guys to work with," said the 36-year-old Bohl.

Like quarterbacks coach Turner Gill, outside linebackers coach Tony Samuel and assistant head coach and running backs coach Frank Solich, Bohl is a former Cornhusker player. He walked-on in 1977 following an outstanding career at Lincoln, Neb., East High School, and played as a defensive back until 1979.

He quit playing because "I had gotten hurt so doggone many times," he said, with just a hint of a Southern accent. More specifically, he suffered a broken leg and a series of shoulder injuries — six separations in all.

Bohl served as a student assistant coach with Nebraska's freshman-junior varsity team in 1980, then became a graduate assistant a year later. He had an aptitude for coaching. "As a player, I not only tried to understand what I did but also what other players around me were supposed to do," he said.

Because he had been a player, and a walk-on at that, he had empathy for those with whom he worked. Communication between coach and player is essential, and such empathy facilitates communication. Plus, "I had always had very positive experiences with coaches myself," Bohl said.

He left Nebraska in 1984 to become the secondary coach at North Dakota State. The move to Fargo, N.D., was the first of six he would make in the next 10 years, leading up to his return to the program in which his coaching career



began.

Young assistants often are forced to become nomadic as they pursue opportunities in quest of just the right situation. No one knows that better than Bohl, who has seen college football from the perspective of an independent as well as from the Big 10 Conference, the Southwest Conference and the Atlantic Coast Conference.

He began his career at the NCAA Division II level. "A lot of people wondered why I would leave Nebraska for North Dakota State," said Bohl.

The Cornhuskers had just played Miami in the 1984 Orange Bowl game, with a national championship on the line. But Bohl was eager to take a full-time coaching job, and North Dakota State's program is perennially successful.

The Bison were comparable to the Cornhuskers in that respect. They had won the Division II national championship in 1983 under Coach Don Morton and were runners-up for the title in 1981. "Some of the older coaches here (at Nebraska) told me to build success so that when the hard times came, I'd have confidence," Bohl said. North Dakota State provided him with such an opportunity.

His first year in Fargo, the Bison again played for the Division II national championship. That first

year also was his last at North Dakota State. Morton, whose record was 57-15 in six seasons there, left to become the head coach at Tulsa University, and he took Bohl along with him.

Bohl coached linebackers at Tulsa, which won five of its last six games to finish 6-5 in 1985. After the Golden Hurricane went 7-4 in 1986, Morton moved again, this time to Wisconsin. And again, he took Bohl.

Bohl's coaching confidence was tested in Madison, Wis. The Badgers were 3-8 during his first season there, and it was worse the next season, when Wisconsin finished a disappointing 1-10.

Bohl moved for a fourth time following the 1988 season, becoming the defensive coordinator at Rice University. When Owls' coach Fred Goldsmith left for Duke in 1994, Bohl, his wife Deanna and their three children also packed up and headed for Durham, N.C. The Blue Devils, who had struggled to a 3-8 record in 1993, earned a bid to the Hall of Fame Bowl and finished the 1994 season at 8-4.

Bohl's defense at Duke earned him the alliterative nickname "Blitzin' Bohl." "People loved it," Bohl said. "At press conferences, everybody wanted to know what blitzes we were using. The head coach (Goldsmith) didn't always know what we were doing." But like

everyone else, Goldsmith was enthusiastic about Bohl's aggressive, attacking defense.

The opportunity to move a sixth time and return to Nebraska arose when Kevin Steele accepted an assistant's job with the Carolina Panthers, a National Football League expansion team. Bohl couldn't have known when he left in 1984 that he would have such an opportunity to return to Nebraska. But he was well-prepared to take advantage of it. And it wasn't a difficult decision.

"This is close to a dream come true," said Bohl, who gives Osborne's staff four former Cornhusker players. "The guys who played here and come back, you cut their arms and Nebraska blood runs out. It's hard to describe. There's a tremendous amount of loyalty. That's a big advantage. It makes you feel good."

The names of the players have changed, but the quality of those players, and the type of individuals they are, hasn't, according to Bohl.

"They're the same," he said.

"They prepare themselves expecting to win. This is a well-run organization, not a lot of egos. They just go out and do their best. At Duke, we had some great players, just not as many." Another difference at Nebraska is, "there isn't as much discrepancy between the first- and second-team guys," said Bohl.

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He prepared for spring practice by studying film of last season. But he brought a fresh perspective to the evaluation of the Cornhuskers' inside linebackers, including returning regulars Phil Ellis and Doug Colman.

Everyone was given a chance to prove himself in competition. That way, both player and team benefit. "You take a guy out of his comfort zone," Bohl said. "That's what spring practice is all about."

One thing that had changed during his absence was Nebraska's defensive philosophy. That the Cornhuskers scrapped their traditional 5-2 base alignment in favor of a 4-3 "kind of did surprise me, to be honest," said Bohl. "I didn't realize it was such a pressurized, attacking style here."

It was to be expected, though. "Nebraska just undersized themselves and went after athletic ability," said Bohl, whose recruiting experience in the southeastern United States and Texas was among the many factors in favor of his hiring according to Osborne.

"The days when you could be passive, read and react, have gone the way of the white buffalo," Bohl said. "The players enjoy this style, coming from all different angles. Obviously, Nebraska is on the cutting edge of college defense."

His 10 years on the road, including six as a defensive coordinator, have given Bohl invaluable perspective, from which the Cornhuskers can now benefit. "What was great was, I had an opportunity to see what the program is all about because I was here," he said, adding that for a young football coach, working at Nebraska is like a business student's earning an MBA degree from Harvard University.

"Then to go away for 10 years, with some programs that were really struggling was great experience. You learn when you get knocked down and have to get back up," he said.

Bohl quickly learned during spring practice. But there were some problems matching the names of players with their faces early on. "That was hard, especially with guys not at my position," said Bohl. "I was calling the defensive backs by their (jersey) numbers. I didn't even know who No. 15 was for a while."

Well, maybe that's a bit of an exaggeration. Even outsiders know Nebraska's No. 15 is quarterback Tommie Frazier. But you get the idea. ■

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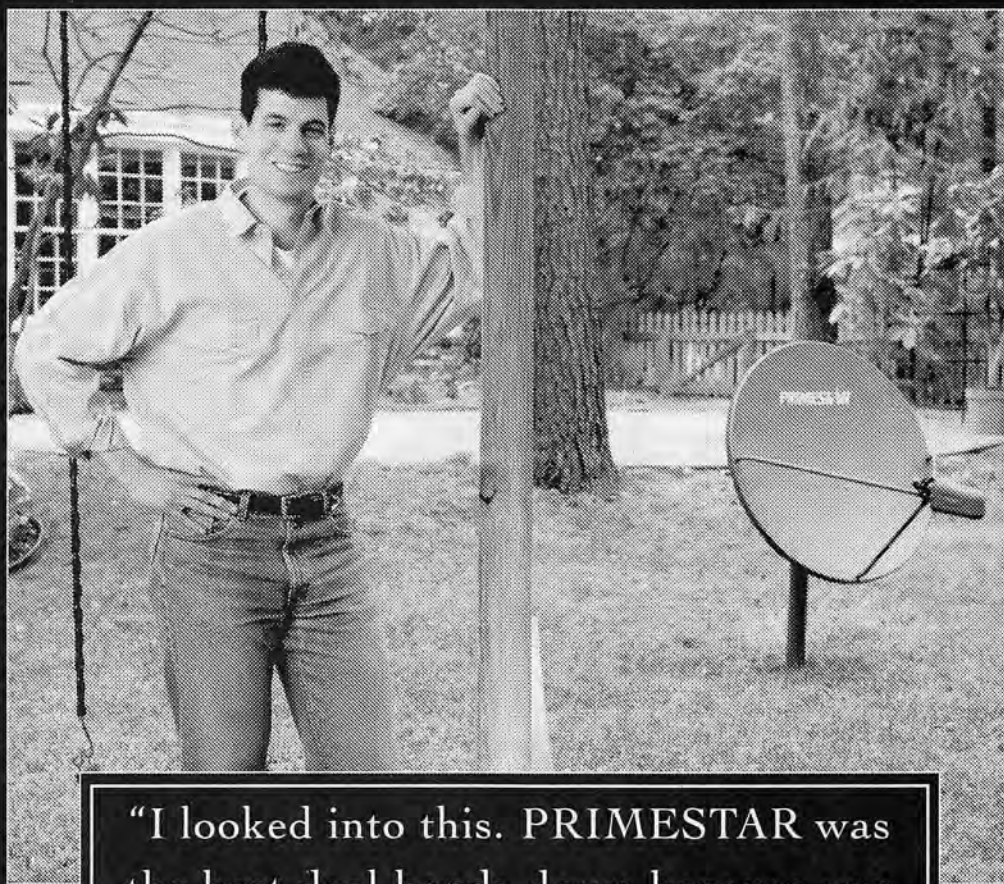
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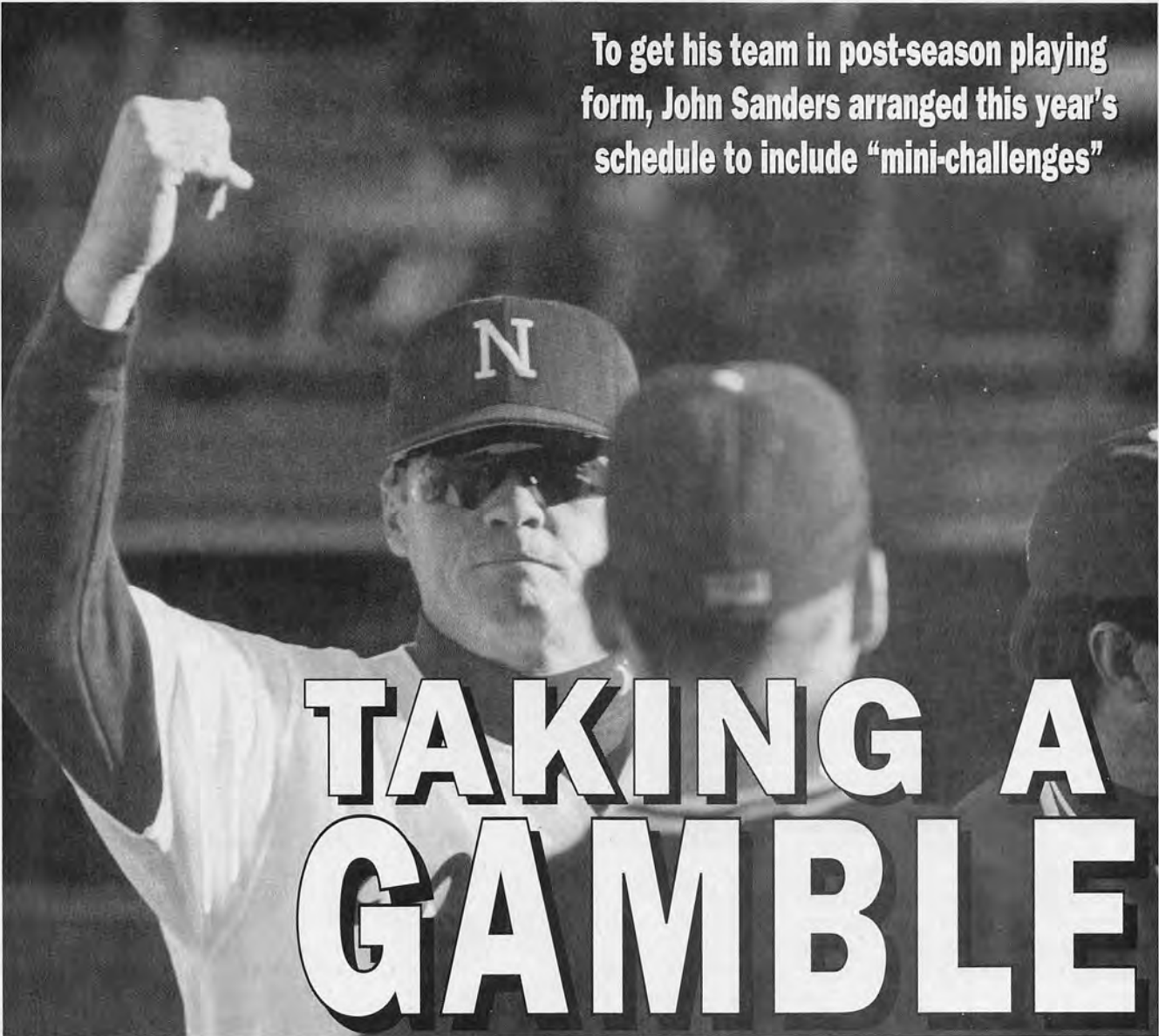
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To get his team in post-season playing form, John Sanders arranged this year's schedule to include "mini-challenges"

# TAKING A GAMBLE

**B**efore John Sanders began his 18th season at Nebraska, his wife Marilee offered him some encouragement. He needed 22 victories to reach 700 for his Cornhusker career, she said. If he was any kind of baseball coach at all, he would get them, and quickly. There can be no greater pressure than that applied by a spouse.

In any case, Sanders was up to the task, picking up No. 700 in the 35th game of the season. For the record, the Cornhuskers defeated Louisville 22-10 at Buck Beltzer Field. And John's son Craig earned the pitching victory.

"This is something important for the whole family," said Craig, a junior right-hander. "With all the hard work and all the dedication, I'm looking at it as something that

makes me proud of him."

Craig Sanders' pride in his father's coaching accomplishment was justified. Only 37 other active coaches in NCAA Division I have amassed 700 victories. And many of them are working in warm-weather programs.

Despite what should be some obvious disadvantages to coaching baseball where spring weather is unpredictable, and often undesirable, the 49-year-old Sanders has persisted. He has had only one losing season at Nebraska. The Cornhuskers were 27-31 in 1989. His teams have won 40 or more games nine times, including seven consecutive seasons from 1979 to 1985. And they have qualified for NCAA regional tournaments three times, most recently in 1985.

Sanders has learned to adapt during that time. His approach toward this season is a case in point.

Sanders arranged Nebraska's schedule so that the Cornhuskers would be on the road, in hopes of avoiding the cancellations and postponements that go with trying to play at home early on. "We made a conscious decision," Sanders said. "Rather than try to schedule games at home and hope for good weather, we scheduled mini challenges."

"We took our show on the road right from Cook Pavilion and Schulte Fieldhouse to play in tournaments, against teams that were pretty much warm-weather, though not all."

After opening with a 9-0 victory against the University of Nebraska-Kearney at Buck Beltzer Field on a rare day of moderate temperature in mid-February, Nebraska traveled to San Diego to compete in the Arthur Gallagher Tournament. The Cornhuskers won three of five games, including a split of two



**After showing spurts of brilliance, Sanders feels more confident in his pitching rotation this year.**

games against host San Diego State and a 6-5 victory against Big Eight rival Oklahoma State, which was ranked No. 1 nationally at mid-season.

In the middle of March, after dropping two conference games against defending NCAA champion Oklahoma in Norman, Okla., they headed west again, to compete in the Desert Classic, played in Las Cruces, N.M., and nearby El Paso, Texas. They won four of six games in the Desert Classic, including a 14-4 victory against New Mexico State.

"You could see our progress in the five days we were there," said Sanders.

Just being able to play on a regular basis, regardless of the outcome, can benefit a baseball team. That's why "those (warm-weather) teams play so well together," he said. "If we don't take these trips and put it on the line, it's hard to get the answers we need. If you don't get games in, how are you going to know?"

There's a downside to such an approach, however, and it's tied to post-season bids. "It can hurt your RPI," Sanders said of the ratings index used by the NCAA tournament selection committee to award at-large bids. "It's a double-edge sword. You try to develop your team, and if you win, fine. But if you lose, you're held hostage by the RPI. It's a big risk if you're coming from cold country.

"You've got to dive in there. You have to do it. That's the Midwest baseball coaches/snafu." The key is, "you have to have confidence in your players," Sanders said.

In the past, the NCAA selection committee took into consideration how a team was playing at the end of the season, according to Sanders. That way, cold-weather programs could overcome poor starts resulting from an inability to play a significant number of games early in the year.

"In the late 1980s, there was some factor in how Midwest teams finished up, how they were doing when they got it together and finished strong," he said. "Now, it's strictly RPI. All games count the same."



This season, Sanders thinks the gamble will pay off. The victory against San Diego State "was a plus," he said, as was the split with New Mexico State, which "is having a pretty good year." If either team were to falter, however, Nebraska's RPI would suffer and so would its chances of getting to an NCAA regional short of winning the confer-

ence title.

Nebraska has started slowly in recent seasons and been behind when Big Eight Conference play began. "We've been playing catch-up," said Sanders. "We've really shot ourselves in the foot."

By putting themselves at risk early this season, "I think we have developed a little more resiliency and awareness of what it's going to take. I'll let you know at season's end," he said.

Sanders' goal is to have the Cornhuskers playing their best at Big Eight Tournament time. But the new approach will be tested before Nebraska heads to Oklahoma City at the end of May, assuming it is among the four qualifiers. The Cornhuskers have five games scheduled against Oklahoma State and Oklahoma on back-to-back weekends at Buck Beltzer Field to complete the conference regular season.

Nebraska lost two out of three against Oklahoma State at Stillwater, Okla., in early April, the second by a



**Alvie Shepherd and the 1995 Huskers have given fans the offense they crave.**



remarkable 37-18 score. The Cornhuskers rallied to win the third game, however, 11-7.

Nebraska was on the winning side of such a slugfest at the Desert Classic, defeating Washington, 35-15. The Cornhuskers also exploded offensively in a double-header sweep of intrastate rival Creighton, defeating the Bluejays, 19-4, in Omaha in the afternoon, then taking a second game at Buck Beltzer Field that night, 12-6. Creighton went into the double-header, forced by weather postponements, ranked 25th nationally.

"They swing the bats as good as any team we've seen," Creighton coach Jack Dahm said. The theme of the cover for Nebraska's 1995 yearbook and media guide is appropriate. "Husker Power Zone," it says.

The Cornhuskers' Darin Erstad went 7-for-10, with five runs batted-in during the double-header against Creighton. Alvie Shepherd hit three home runs in the two games. And Todd Sears got six hits, including two home runs, and drove in eight runs against the beleaguered Bluejays' pitching staff.

Such offense has become commonplace at the collegiate level, according to Sanders. The key factors are aluminum bats and a dearth of pitching, produced by major league signings of pitching talent out of high school. "Fans want offense. They want home runs," Sanders said.

And they're likely to get those things at the collegiate level. "An outstanding pitching performance stands out now," he said. "What you're trying to do is assemble a pitching staff to go with the lead pipes, those aluminum bats." A premium has been placed on a "pitching staff that can give you spurts of brilliance.

"College coaches have a tremendous chore, to develop pitching."

Sanders would like to think the early-season tournaments will help Nebraska in that connection. "It's like spring training. You get a chance to stagger your pitching," he said.

"You know you're going to play, and you can set up a rotation. At Big Eight Tournament time, the good news is, you've been there."

If you can GET there, of course. The Cornhuskers have been to Oklahoma City for the tournament 13 times in the previous 17 seasons under Sanders. He's looking to make it 14 at the end of May. ■



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On the first Sunday in April, Darin Erstad went 6-for-6 at the plate in the Nebraska baseball team's 17-2 victory against Missouri. His performance tied the school record for most hits

in a game, originally set by Gene Torczon in 1958 and matched in 1992 by Marc Sagmoen.

But on this day, Erstad was left in awe not by his effort, but by that of teammate Todd Sears, who completed a phenomenal feat of hitting for the cycle (single-double-triple-home run).

"He showed me up," said Erstad, laughing.

Come June, when the Major League amateur baseball draft is held, Erstad will be laughing again because he's shown those who matter most that he has a lot more in him than showmanship.

*Baseball America* lists the 6-2, 200-pounder from Jamestown, N.D., as the top pro prospect in college, and Erstad is certainly putting up can't-miss numbers. In the first 31 games, and halfway through the Big Eight Conference regular-season schedule, he was leading the league with a .452 batting average and had team-bests in hits (31), RBI (45), home runs (11), doubles (12) and triples (4).

The last time someone from North Dakota had that kind of year, Roger Maris hit 61 home runs for the

New York Yankees.

And that was 1961.

"He was an OK hitter. . . had some power," said Erstad, grinning like he'd just been thrown a fast ball down the pipe.

This season, the junior left fielder has made just about every pitch tossed his way look served up. At his present pace, Erstad has a legitimate shot at establishing Nebraska records for the big three offensive categories: average, home runs and RBI.

"From what I've seen, he's using the junior year as a motivational device and not a distraction," said NU Coach John Sanders.

The distraction would be the upcoming draft. But if Erstad is feeling pressure, it doesn't show.

"I don't feel that I have a glaring weakness that someone can exploit," Erstad said. "I'm not satisfied at all, but I feel very comfortable."

Erstad was feeling the same way last year, before he embarked on his first trip through Nebraska spring football practice. Tom Osborne had been so impressed with Erstad's leg strength that after the 1994 football season he offered him a full ride, instead of the partial baseball scholarship he had. Erstad was pumped — maybe too much.

When spring practice began, he was hitting .375. When it ended, his average had dipped to .315.

"I was having so much fun in football I got caught up in it," said

**Football gave Darin Erstad a national championship ring, but baseball is his focus for the future**

**DIAMOND  
VISION**



Erstad, who focused only on baseball his freshman season.

Osborne should be thankful. But Erstad, who ranked 14th nationally by averaging 42.6 yards per punt and was second in net average for the national champion Cornhuskers, has put away his kicking shoe — most likely for good.

"Darin's 6-2, 200 pounds, runs well above average, hits for average and power, throws well and plays outstanding defense. That's a prototypical big-leaguer," said Sanders.

Erstad also has other intangible qualities that make him look more and more like a sure thing for whichever team can sign him.

"He comes to play every day," Sanders added. "And being from a smaller community, he's very humble. Therefore, he always strives for improvement."

Erstad's doing so against pitchers who are doing their best to not let him be the one who beats them.

"Mostly outside and not many fastballs," said Erstad, describing his normal selection of pitches to hit. "But when they do (throw a fastball), a lot are coming inside because they think that I'm looking away. That hasn't worked out too well."

Not for the pitchers, anyway.

Sanders seems to be relishing Erstad's junior season as much as the player. Of course, in his 18 seasons as Nebraska's coach he hasn't had many Erstads.

Steve Stanicek, an All-America first baseman in 1982, had similar talents. Stanicek was drafted in the 15th round coming out of high school, and three years later was a first-round pick of the San Francisco Giants.

Erstad was a 13th-round pick of the New York Mets before becoming a Cornhusker. Had he wanted to, he also could have chosen to develop his hockey skills. A wing for his high school team, Erstad scored more goals than any hockey player in Jamestown history. That earned him all-state honors and got him attention from some NCAA Division I schools.

Like hockey and baseball, he also was a two-time all-stater in football and track.

The only time Erstad played organized baseball during his high school years was with the American

Legion team during summer. Jamestown High had no baseball team.

"I'm sure when Darin came he probably asked himself how well he could do," Sanders said. "Then he starts to see success and says 'whoa, I can do pretty well here.' I think it's a self-fulfilling prophecy."

Why did Erstad choose to go the baseball route? There's a number of reasons. For one, he'd have more opportunities to catch on with a team, and also have a better chance at having a long career.

But there also was a passion for baseball that other sports just didn't give Erstad. Take, for instance, an experience he had last August.

After finishing up playing for Falmouth, Mass., in the prestigious Cape Cod League, a season in which he earned the league's MVP award, Erstad and a friend headed back to Lincoln so he could make it for the start of football practice. But first, they had to make a stop at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum at Cooperstown, N.Y.

They arrived there in the early-morning hours, parked the car near the Hall of Fame and went to sleep in the car. They awoke briefly around 8 a.m., saw the streets were still deserted and went back to sleep only to be awoken by the curious stares of strange faces distracted by the loaded-down car with North Dakota license plates and the two sleeping occupants.

Erstad, who had toured the Hall of Fame before, still spent about three hours with his friend looking

at relics from baseball's past before hitting the road again. He made it back to Lincoln with little time to spare.

"I see tapes when I was barely walking. I played more games with a big red bat and a whiffle ball going one-on-one with a buddy every day in the summer," Erstad said. "We still go out and do that."

"A ballpark. . . you can have all the stress in the world and go play for three hours. And it's a game. I just love the smells, the way it's played, the strategies involved."

The towering home runs.

Sanders didn't see those in person until Erstad showed up on the NU campus. The North Dakota find was indeed a diamond in the rough.

"These guys didn't see me play," Erstad said. "When I was 17 (after his junior year in high school), there were four or five scouts that came to watch. That was like God coming."

The next year, 20 scouts were in Jamestown. But Erstad turned them all away, and then turned down money from the Mets in order to go to college.

What a decision. In a couple of months, Erstad is likely to have wealth, happiness and nothing but a promising career in front of him. And just for extra measure, he's got a national championship football ring.

"I've worked my tail off," said Erstad, also an Academic All-Big Eight honoree. "I think my mental approach is a lot better. I think I've got it a lot better planned."

At the plate and beyond. ■



Bob Berry

**A 13th round pick out of high school, Erstad is now considered to be the best baseball prospect in the country as a junior.**



# Alvin Mitchell Highlights Hoop Signee Class Of Four

**E**ven though he was concentrating on his senior year at Omaha, Neb., Burke High School, Alvin Mitchell shared in the frustrations of the Nebraska basketball team this season.

After leading Burke to victory against Lincoln Southeast in the first round of the Nebraska School Activities Association Class A state tournament at the Devaney Sports Center in March, he said: "I'm concentrating on the tournament right now, but I can't help thinking about Nebraska."

Mitchell had more than a passing interest in the Cornhuskers. For one thing, he played a lot with Terrance Badgett and Jaron Boone over the summer. For another, he signed a letter of intent in November to accept at scholarship from Nebraska.

Mitchell, a two-time Nebraska high school Super-Stater, and Bernard Garner, a first-team junior college All-American at Western Nebraska Community College, were the Cornhuskers' early letter-of-intent signees. They were joined in April by two more high school recruits: Tyronn Lue from Raytown, Mo., and Larry Florence from Phenix City, Ala.

Mitchell and Lue are guards. Garner, 6-foot-7, 220-pound, and Florence, 6-6, 215, are forwards..

Lue, a 6-foot point guard from Raytown High, averaged 23.5 points, five rebounds, eight assists and six steals in leading his team to a 27-1 record this season. The loss came in the state sectional finals. Raytown High had been ranked No. 1 in the state.

Among the other schools Lue considered were Oklahoma, Missouri, Kansas State and Arkansas. Lue said he was attracted to the Cornhuskers because of their up-tempo style of play. His skills are

well-suited to such a style. He is exceptionally quick.

Garner, who is from Many, La., averaged 17.5 points and nine rebounds in leading Western Nebraska Community College to a 36-4 record and third place in the National Junior College Athletic Association tournament at Hutchinson, Kan., this season.

Garner originally enrolled at South Florida out of high school but withdrew before the basketball season began, transferring to Western Nebraska CC. He was recruited by many prominent Division I programs, according to Dave Campbell, his coach there.

"You name them, they were all calling here," Campbell told the *Lincoln Journal-Star*.

Mitchell, like Lue, is 6-foot tall. But he was recruited as an off guard. He is an explosive offensive player, scoring 44 points in a state tournament game as a junior. Among the schools that contacted him before he signed with Nebraska were Temple, Syracuse and California.

Florence averaged 19 points and 13 rebounds in leading his high school team to a 27-2 record in Alabama's large-schools classification.

At press time, Mitchell and Florence had not met NCAA freshman eligibility requirements. Both apparently would enroll at Nebraska even if they fail to qualify immediately. If he comes up short, Mitchell said, he will still lend moral support, if that's all he can do, until he can contribute on the court.

With the signing of letters of intent by Lue and Florence, the Cornhuskers are one over the limit of 13 scholarships for next season. Erick Strickland does not count against that total because his contract with the major league baseball Florida Marlins provides for their paying the costs associated with his college education. ■



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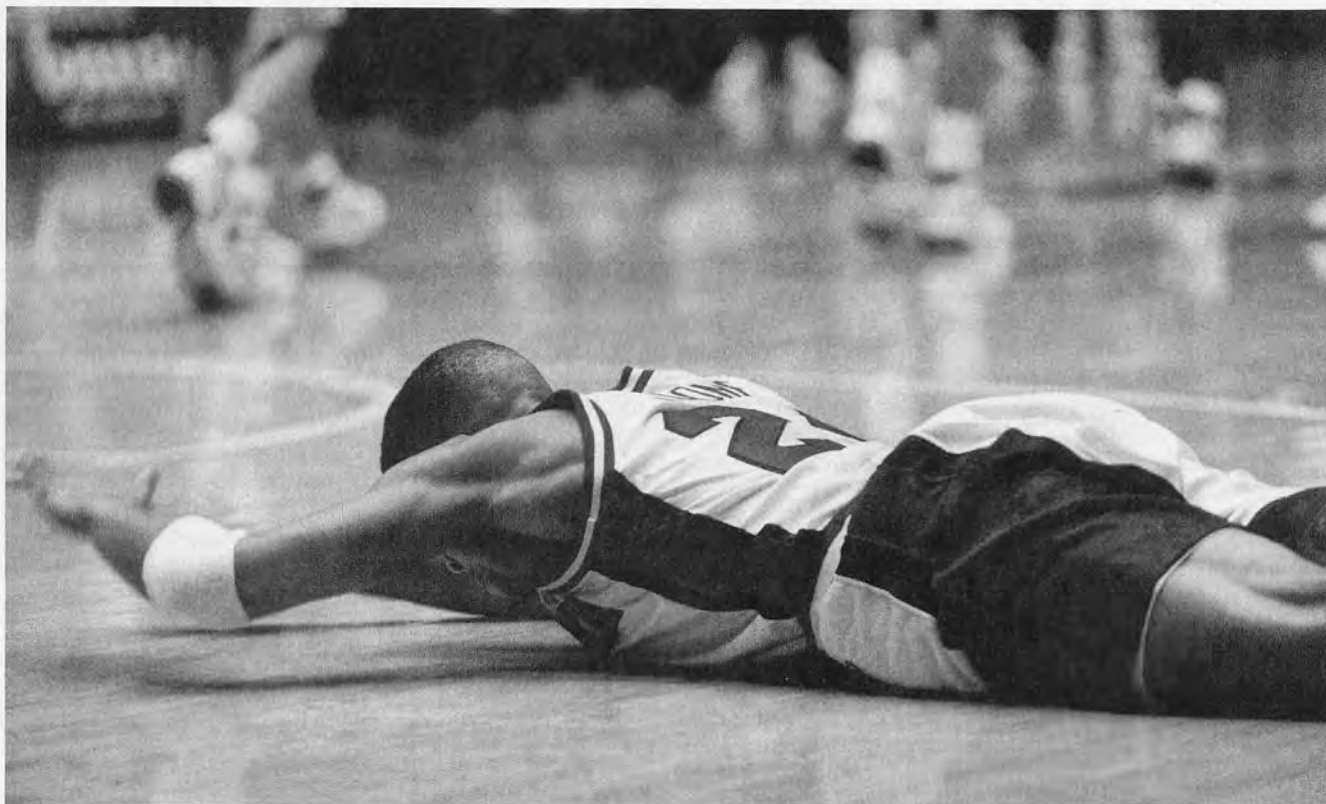
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## HOOP SIGNEES

PLAYER	POST.	HT.	WT.	HOMETOWN/COLLEGE
Tyronn Lue	Guard	6-0	170	Kansas City, Mo.
Larry Florence	Forward	6-6	215	Phenix City, Ala.
Bernard Garner	Forward	6-7	225	W. Nebraska CC
Alvin Mitchell	Guard	6-2	180	Omaha (Burke), Neb.





# Addition By SUBTRACTION

**The pain of the  
1995 season  
could be erased  
in 1996 after the  
Huskers lose one  
senior and  
gain six**

**N**ebraska scored the first 12 points of the second half against Penn State in the second round of the National Invitation Tournament at the Bob Devaney Sports Center.

The Cornhuskers broke open a game that had been tied at 36 at halftime and appeared to be well on their way to a much-anticipated quarterfinal matchup against their next-door neighbor Iowa in Iowa City.

For just under four minutes, they played as they were expected to play all season. Then, as they had played much of the season, they backed off, slowed down and allowed Penn State to set the pace for the remainder of the game. As a result, the game was their last.

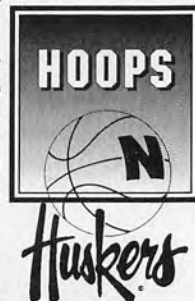
"The things you saw in this game plagued us the whole season," Coach Danny Nee said during his post-game interview. He didn't have to say anything more about his ninth

Nebraska team.

Penn State won 65-59, the Cornhuskers' third-lowest point total of the season. The two lowest both came against an Oklahoma State team that reached the NCAA Tournament's Final Four. Even though the Cornhuskers shot a better percentage than Penn State from the field, they made only 2-of-9 three-point shots, compared to Penn State's dramatically untypical 12 of 28.

Nebraska somehow managed to advance to the NIT's second round by defeating Georgia 69-61 at the Sports Center, despite hitting only 2-of-21 three-point shots. That was typical of what could happen to the Cornhuskers.

Penn State also out rebounded Nebraska 39-29, a disparity that was



commonplace throughout the season. The Cornhuskers were out rebounded in 17 of their 32 games. In short (no pun intended), it was business as usual for Nebraska during the final 16-plus minutes of the 1994-95 season.

The season ended in disappointment and frustration, after high expectations turned into 18-14 reality, a mediocre performance when considered in the context of recent Cornhusker seasons.

After four consecutive trips to the NCAA Tournament, Nebraska had to settle for the NIT. And only two games in the consolation tournament, at that.

"I think we're better than what it showed," Nee said. But the inconsistent Cornhuskers couldn't overcome some significant shortcomings, which were apparent from the beginning. In their second game of the season against Virginia Tech in the San Juan Shoot-out, they squandered an 11-point, second-half lead and lost 87-81.

Ironically, perhaps, Virginia Tech won the NIT, defeating Marquette in the championship game at Madison Square Garden, after Marquette defeated Penn State in the semifinals.

After the victory against Georgia, before one of the smallest home crowds (8,040) during Nee's tenure as head coach, Nebraska junior Tom Wald refused to be swept up in the excitement. "We've settled for a little less than we ought to this season," he said.

By Wald's criteria, it seemed, anything short of advancing to the NIT semifinals in New York City, and possibly even reaching the championship game, would have been unacceptable. Nebraska was probably only a shred of consistency away. But then, had they been less erratic, the Cornhuskers probably would have made a fifth consecutive trip to the NCAA Tournament. They weren't that far away, even though now it must seem like light years.

Penn State coach Bruce Parkhill complemented the Cornhuskers before leaving Lincoln. "They're going to be a heck of a team next year, athletically. They'll be tough, real tough," he said.

Nee has concurred with Parkhill's prediction for 1995-96. "There's a lot of potential in that group," he said.

The players to whom Nee referred were this year's. But they will be the same next season, except for Melvin Brooks, the only

## BOONE EARNS JACK MOORE AWARD

Junior guard Jaron Boone, a consensus second-team All-Big Eight selection, received the 1995 Jack Moore Award as Nebraska's most outstanding player at the Huskers' annual awards banquet.

Boone, the fifth Nebraska junior to receive the award, led the Huskers in scoring with a 17.5 points per game average and 3-point percentage (.385), which ranking second in steals (40) and third in assists (116). The Big Eight's seventh-leading scorer for all games, Boone averaged 20.8 points in league play to rank third in the conference. He hit at least one 3-point goal in a school-record 24-straight games during the season. He also set NU one-season marks for treys made (70) and attempted (182). Boone's 559 points ranked as the fifth-highest single-season offensive output in school history.

Boone heads into his senior season ranked among NU's all-time leaders in scoring (1,140, 13th), 3-point goals made (122, third) and attempted (334, third), assists (312, seventh) and steals (102, 10th). He also received the team's outstanding offensive player award and the Ironman Award, given annually to the player who improves the most in the Huskers' strength and conditioning program.

For the third-consecutive year, junior Erick Strickland was named the outstanding defensive player. He set NU records for steals in a season (89) and career (196). Strickland led the Big Eight in steals and ranked among the nation's leaders for much of the season. He will enter his senior season ranked 17th on the Huskers' career scoring list (1,070), second on both the 3-point goals made (127) and attempted (365) lists. An honorable mention All-Big Eight choice, Strickland was named to the conference's all-defensive team for the second-straight year. He also received statistical awards for leading the team in both steals (89) and assists (133).

Freshman guard Chester Surles was named as the outstanding newcomer after averaging 3.2 points and 1.7 rebounds in 29 games. Swingman Jason Glock was honored as the squad's top scholar-athlete.

After averaging 8 points and 6.2 rebounds, sophomore center Mikki Moore was voted the most improved player. Also named to the Big Eight's version of the same team, Moore led the Husker squad in rebounding and blocked a team-high 67 shots — third-highest one-season total in school history.

Junior forward Terrance Badgett received the squad's Hondo Award for unselfish play, while spirit awards were presented to junior guard Lee Steinbrook, walk-on guards Chris Crayton, a freshman, and sophomore Zac Clause. The lone senior on the 1995 roster, forward Melvin Brooks, received the Huskers' Captain Award.

Other statistical awards were presented to junior center Chris Sallee, who led the squad in field goal percentage (.560) and junior guard Tom Wald, NU's top free throw shooter (.833). ■



**Jaron Boone averaged 20.8 points in league play to rank third in the conference.**

Cornhusker to complete his eligibility in 1995.

"It'll be addition by subtraction," said Nee. "Take away one senior and add six."

In addition to the eight carryover players, Nee will have, in effect, six newcomers, assuming everyone meets NCAA. Andy Markowski, Leif Nelson and Chad Ideus red-shirted as freshmen this season. Alvin Mitchell, Tyrone Lue and Larry Florence will be incoming

freshmen, though not all three are expected to meet NCAA eligibility requirements. And Bernard Garner will be a junior transfer from Western Nebraska Community College in Scottsbluff, Neb.

Six of the returnees will be seniors, the most Nee has had at Nebraska: Wald, Jaron Boone, Erick Strickland, Terrance Badgett, Jason Glock and Chris Sallee, who will complete his eligibility first semester. See ADDITION page 30





# Malesev Savors School's First High Jump Title, Gymnastics And Softball Prepare For Postseason

**W**hile unhappy with his overall performance at the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships, Nebraska's Petar Malesev was pleased with the final outcome. That's because Malesev became the first Husker to win an NCAA high jump title, clearing 7 feet, 4 1/2 inches to do so.

Winning wasn't the only thing for Malesev, a senior from Novi Sad, Yugoslavia. He wanted more, such as a school record or a season-best performance.

He got neither, yet the championship did help ease his disappointment.

"I was lucky in a way," he said. "I didn't think, going into the meet, that 7-4 would win it. I figured I'd have to jump 7-6 to have a chance to do it. But I won, so I can't complain too much."

Malesev has a good reason for not being in prime condition at the end of the indoor season. He started the year strong in January and kept up the pace through the end of February.

In nine meets indoors, Malesev jumped 7-4 1/2 or higher six times. In early February, Malesev broke a four-year personal record when he cleared 7-5 3/4 during a dual meet. So he just missed out on his goal to break the Nebraska indoor record of 7-6 set by Jeff Loescher in 1976.

Performing at a high level throughout a long stretch of time took its toll on Malesev.

"I had nine meets indoors, and most of them were very demanding," he said. "I was exhausted by the end of the year. My body didn't have much left."

Malesev will adjust his training schedule during the outdoor season in order to avoid a late-season slowdown. Instead of trying to keep up high-intensity performances throughout the year, he will start slow and hope to pick up speed by

the end of the year.

In other words, he won't care how he's jumping in April, but rather how he'll do at the NCAA Outdoor Championships in June.

"I need to rebuild my base of training and not worry about results for awhile," Malesev said. "I need to take it slow so I'll be peaking at the end of the season this time. I don't think 7-4 1/2 will be good enough to



**Senior Petar Malesev cleared 7-feet-4 1/2 to win his first NCAA title.**

win a championship again."

Nebraska junior Paulette Mitchell placed second in the women's shot put with a school-record toss of 55-5. Mitchell led the Huskers to a ninth place finish in the team race.

Nebraska also swept Big Eight titles during the indoor season. The Husker women won their 16th straight indoor conference crown, while the men won for the second straight year.

## Gymnastics

The Nebraska women's gymnastics team also won the Big Eight title this season. But more importantly, the Huskers qualified for the NCAA meet for the first time since 1990.

Nebraska earned a berth in the 12-team national field by finishing second in the Midwest Regional behind third-ranked Utah. The Huskers entered the national meet seeded ninth.

"Qualifying tells me a lot of hard work has been put in by our gymnasts," Nebraska women's coach Dan Kendig said. "We've got our-

selves in a situation where we can score well with the routines we have. And we're getting more and more consistent."

The Huskers broke the school scoring record during their final two meets of the season before nationals. Nebraska scored 194.725 to place second in the regional and scored 184.45 to win the Big Eight championship.

All season long, the Huskers' goal was to qualify for nationals. With that accomplished, Kendig said the goal is being upgraded to reach the six-team finals.

"It has been the goal all year, but drawing ninth seed, it's going to be tough," he said.

The Husker men's gymnastics team also qualified for the NCAA meet. But unlike in the past, the Huskers will enter the meet as underdogs.

Nebraska entered the meet as the defending national champion. Last year, Nebraska won the programs eighth NCAA team title, all under coach Francis Allen.

Nebraska entered the meet ranked third in the nation, but has finished behind every other team but one in a meet during the season.

"It's a different experience (being an underdog)," Allen said. "We've been the national favorite many, many times. You have to use a different approach now. You have to coach these kids differently. It taxes your coaching ability."

## Softball

Even with a month of serious softball remaining in the season, Nebraska can already claim its had one of its best seasons in recent history.

The Huskers won their 30th game of the season on April 15 with a 3-1 victory over Northern Iowa. It marked the first 30-win season for a Nebraska team in five years.

"It feels good to have 30 wins, but we still know we have a lot of work left to do this season," said Husker Coach Rhonda Revelle, who is in her third season at Nebraska.

Husker pitcher Angela Blackwood won the milestone game, improving to 13-7. She also went 3-for-3 at the plate to help her cause. ■



# SPRING

From page 11

national championship than they had in the past.

"Tommie was right on when he said that," Gilman said.

Nebraska will attempt to win a fifth consecutive Big Eight championship, before the conference expands by four programs in 1996. If the Cornhuskers are to play for a national title again, they'll do so in the Fiesta Bowl rather than the Orange Bowl. The Big Eight's contract with the Orange Bowl expired with Nebraska's 24-17 victory against Miami. Under this season's agreement, the top-ranked team in the bowl alliance will play the next-highest ranked team in the alliance in the Fiesta Bowl.

Back-up quarterback Matt Turman, who came off the bench to direct a victory against Oklahoma State then started the victory against Kansas State, said he had more requests to speak than he could accommodate.

During the spring, Nebraska began developing an offensive line to replace one that ranked among the best in Cornhusker history: the "pipeline" included Brenden Stai, Zach Wiegert, Joel Wilks and Rob Zatechka, all of whom are gone. Senior center Aaron Graham is the only returning starter. But an eager group that includes senior Steve Ott, juniors Chris Dishman, Adam Treu, Matt Vrzal and Kory Mikos, and sophomores Aaron Taylor, Eric Anderson and Jon Zatechka, as well as some unheralded veteran reserves such as senior Steve Volin, showed a willingness to make the necessary commitment.

The Cornhuskers set about finding replacements for linebackers Ed Stewart and Troy Dumas, defensive tackle Terry Connealy, outside linebackers Donta Jones and Dwayne Harris, fullback Cory Schlesinger, defensive backs Kareem Moss and Barron Miles and wingback Abdul Muhammad, to name just a few.

As in the past, Nebraska didn't rebuild; it began reloading in the spring. As a result, there is good reason for optimism.

"I don't know how realistic it is to set a goal of four national championships," said sophomore outside linebacker Grant Wistrom, who played an important role in winning the first. "But what the heck?" ■



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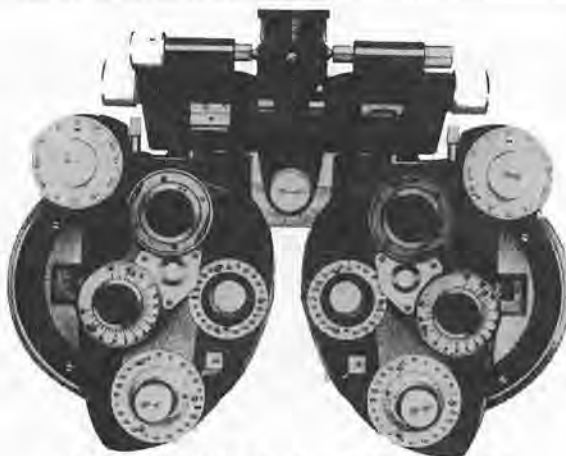
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# ADDITION

From page 27

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Penn State coach Bruce Parkhill complemented the Cornhuskers before leaving Lincoln. "They're going to be a heck of a team next year, athletically. They'll be tough, real tough," he said.

Nee has concurred with Parkhill's prediction for 1995-96. "There's a lot of potential in that group," he said.

The players to whom Nee

**"I understand what we have to do to get better. Decision-making is a key, and we have to come up a whole level defensively. If we improve those two things, we'll be better."**

— Danny Nee



referred were this year's. But they will be the same next season, except for Melvin Brooks, the only Cornhusker to complete his eligibility in 1995.

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In addition to the eight carryover players, Nee will have, in effect, six newcomers, assuming everyone meets NCAA. Andy Markowski, Leif Nelson and Chad Ideus red-shirted as freshmen this season. Alvin Mitchell, Tyronn Lue and Larry Florence will be incoming freshmen, though not all three are expected to meet NCAA eligibility requirements. And Bernard Garner will be a junior transfer from

Western Nebraska Community College in Scottsbluff, Neb.

Six of the returnees will be seniors, the most Nee has had at Nebraska: Wald, Jaron Boone, Erick Strickland, Terrance Badgett, Jason Glock and Chris Sallee, who will complete his eligibility first semester. Nebraska was unsuccessful in an attempt to gain another semester for Sallee, a junior college transfer.

Boone, Strickland and Badgett were starters throughout the season. Wald started some. Mikki Moore will be a junior, with the benefit of another year's worth of maturity. And Chester Surles will be a sophomore, assuming he doesn't sit out a redshirt, something he might have

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